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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LJUBLJANA 000111

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EUR/NCE FOR SADLE, EUR/RPM

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: CONTINUING ITS COMMITMENT TO NATO IN
AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. SECSTATE 13871
[1](#)B. LJUBLJANA 95
[1](#)C. LJUBLJANA 52

Classified By: COM for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Slovenia begins its fifth year of commitment to Afghanistan this week with the deployment of 53 fresh soldiers for a six month rotation with the Italian-led PRT in Herat. These troops relieve 52 troops deployed at that location since August 2006. The GoS announced this fall that its next rotation of troops to Afghanistan in August 2007 will increase by 20 percent from fifty four to sixty six. This consistent troop commitment is complemented by recent donations of rifles and ammunition for 10,000 new members of the Afghanistan Security Forces. The GoS's recent decision to send troops to KFOR in Kosovo with greatly reduced caveats may foreshadow a move by Prime Minister Janez Jansa to push forward with reducing restrictions on SAF troops in Afghanistan. END SUMMARY.

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Contributions: Troops, Weapons, Ammunition, Moral Support
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[1](#)2. (U) On February 19, 53 soldiers from the Slovenian Armed Forces departed Celje, Slovenia for a six month rotation with the Italian-led PRT in the western Afghan town of Herat. The troops will relieve 52 Slovenes currently deployed at that location. There are also two Slovenes serving in the ISAF command in Kabul. This rotation begins the fifth consecutive year that Slovenia will have a presence in the ISAF mission. As announced on the sidelines of the Riga summit in late November, the GoS has committed to add 12 to 15 additional troops to its contingent in Afghanistan. The expansion to approximately 66 troops in Herat is expected to come in fall 2007 and will most likely coincide with the next deployment of Slovenian troops in August 2007.

[1](#)3. (U) In late September 2006, during an informal meeting of NATO defense ministers hosted by Slovenia in the coastal town of Portoroz, Minister of Defense Karl Erjavec announced a GOS pledge to equip approximately one half of the 20,000 troops that will be added to the existing Afghanistan Security Forces. The donation included 10,000 decommissioned automatic rifles and two million rounds of ammunition (a total value of USD 660,000). It was delivered in early November 2006, less than six weeks after the announcement.

[1](#)4. (U) In November both Foreign Minister Dimitrij Rupel and Prime Minister Janez Jansa came out of the NATO summit in Riga publicly calling for additional development aid to Afghanistan, institution building, the strengthening of civil society and democracy, and economic investments. They also both talked about the possibility of reducing some caveats on

SAF troops currently deployed to Afghanistan and said the GoS was rethinking its position on this.

What's Next: Reducing Caveats, Expanding Civilian Cooperation

15. (U) SAF troops serving in Afghanistan currently operate with three main caveats: they are geographically limited to operating in Herat, they cannot intervene in cases of civil unrest, and they have orders only to protect their base and convoys that operate from it. PM Jansa has been quoted in the press as saying that the GoS is "rethinking restrictions," saying that this is "simply about eliminating some obstacles, which are sometimes illogical." That said, he has been careful to say that rethinking caveats does not necessarily mean SAF troops would be redeployed to more dangerous parts of Afghanistan.

16. (U) The question of caveats on SAF troops in Afghanistan arose again in early February when Slovenian leaders agreed to deploy 600 troops to KFOR with considerably reduced restrictions on their activity (Ref B). The decision marks a major shift in GoS policy and the first time that Slovenian troops have been deployed abroad without major restrictions on their movement, activities, and function. It occurred without a change in Slovenian law, contrary to claims often cited by Chief of Defense Albin Gutman and MOD Erjavec in meetings with USG officials that legal issues were the major roadblock to reducing caveats on Slovenian troops. Significantly, there was little public backlash. Speaking to the press on this decision, Prime Minister Jansa, who previously told USG officials that Slovenes will eventually operate abroad with reduced caveats, told media outlets that

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"Slovenia respects the decision of the November summit of NATO and reduced national caveats," continuing that "it makes no sense to send a strong peacekeeping force to a hot spot and (limit) its powers." Jansa has said that the GoS is planning for even fewer restrictions on troop activities in the future, but has not engaged on where or when this will happen. The obvious next location -- and that most often mentioned in the press -- is Afghanistan.

17. (U) Though the GoS has not yet announced any civilian aid commitments to Afghanistan, FM Rupel has mentioned publicly that the GoS is considering additional non-military assistance in the areas of education and training for security forces. Though its international development funds are extremely modest, Slovenia is increasingly interested in contributing internationally through development assistance as well.

18. (C) COMMENT. The GoS has repeatedly heard and responded to USG calls for more international contributions, particularly to Afghanistan. And it often participates in numbers that far outpace other coalition members on a per capita basis. While the GoS felt it could not commit outright to some of our requests at Riga and the informal ministerial in Brussels in January 2007, it is increasingly showing support where it is able, from increasing troop deployment numbers, to weapons and equipment donations, to public statements saying all the right things. Slovenia might be able to do more in Afghanistan. However, a general request for further troop contributions is likely to yield few results. A more tailored and creative approach to seek out specific contributions in niche areas like the Mountain Warfare School (Ref C) that the GoS is well suited to provide, could yield further and enthusiastic participation by the SAF. Alternatively, we should be prepared to explore options if the GoS is ready to take a more serious look at contributing in the civilian sphere, particularly in the areas of education and security forces training.

19. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED. The decision to send SAF troops to

KFOR with greatly reduced restrictions represents a big test for PM Jansa with the public and for the SAF operationally. The decision was most certainly made by Jansa himself, and it can serve as a litmus test of the public's concern about Slovenes being deployed abroad in potentially dangerous positions. That the decision to lift most restrictions was observed by the public and the press without great criticism, should give Jansa the confidence to push forward to reduce restrictions on SAF troops in more difficult places like Afghanistan. END COMMENT.
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